

**PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF THE FUTURE OF GENETIC ENGINEERING IN
VERONICA ROTH'S *DIVERGENT TRILOGY* NOVEL (2011-2013):
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA



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MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA

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APPROVAL

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini adalah tentang Pessimistic View of The Future of Genetic Engineering in Veronica Roth's *Divergent Trilogy* Novel (2011-2013) yang dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan Sosiologis. Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi karakteristik-karakteristik pandangan pessimistic tentang masa depan rekayasa genetika, untuk menggambarkan bagaimana pandangan pesimistik tentang masa depan rekayasa genetika, untuk mengungkapkan mengapa Veronica Roth memberikan keprihatinannya dalam isu-isu masa depan dalam novel *Divergent Trilogy* berdasarkan pendekatan Sociological. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam penelitian kualitatif. Data primer dari penelitian ini adalah novel karya Veronica Roth berjudul *Divergent Trilogy* yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2011 sampai 2013, sementara data sekunder dari penelitian ini adalah sumber lain yang terkait dalam studi ini, seperti: referensi-referensi online, dan beberapa buku yang mendukung penelitian ini. Peneliti menarik tiga kesimpulan dalam penelitian ini. *Pertama*, pandangan pesimistik tentang masa depan rekayasa genetika dikarakterisasikan oleh sifat-sifat seperti persepsi negatif, kegelisahan, kesedihan, keputus-asaan, penuh keragua-raguan, dan kepercayaan diri yang rendah. *Kedua*, pandangan pesimistik tentang masa depan rekayasa genetika digambarkan terutama melalui plot yang mengilustrasikan bahwa masyarakat tidak dapat berkembang secara alamiah, masyarakat menginginkan perlakuan setara antara genetika yang rusak dan genetika yang bersih, masyarakat melakukan pembalasan dendam ke biro, dan genetika yang rusak selalu dituduh sebagai sebab peperangan, pemberontakan atau sejenis dengan tindakan buruk. *Ketiga*, alasan yang mendasari penulis ingin menyampaikan keprihatinannya tentang isu-isu masa depan adalah penulis ingin meningkatkan kesadaran kebutuhan untuk bijak dalam penggunaan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, khususnya rekayasa genetika.

Kata Kunci: Pesimistik, Divergent Trilogy, Sociology of literature, Rekayasa Genetika.

ABSTRACT

This study is about Pessimistic View of The Future of Genetic Engineering in Veronica Roth's *Divergent Trilogy* Novel (2011-2013), which is analyzed by using Sociological approach. The objectives of the study are to identify the characteristics of Pessimistic View of the Future of Genetic Engineering, to depict how Pessimistic View of the Future of Genetic Engineering, to reveal why Veronica Roth give concern in futuristic issues.

This research belongs to qualitative research. The primary data of this research is *Divergent Trilogy* by Veronica Roth, while the secondary data of this research is other sources related to the study, such as: virtual sources and other printed materials that support this research. The researcher draws three conclusions in this research. *First*, the Pessimistic View of the Future of Genetic Engineering is characterized by such qualities as negative perception, anxiety, sadness, despair, doubtfulness, and low self-esteem. *Second*, the Pessimistic View of the Future of Genetic Engineering is depicted mainly through the plot illustrating that society cannot develop naturally, society wants equal treatment between genetic damage and genetic pure, society commit revenge to the bureau, and genetic damage is always accused of war, rebellion, or the kind of bad action. *Third*, the underlying reason of the author to give concern in futuristic issues is that the author wants to raise the awareness of the need for wise usage of science and technology, especially genetic engineering.

Keywords: Pessimistic, *Divergent Trilogy*, Sociology of literature, Genetic Engineering.

1. Introduction

People have different perspectives about the future. Some are optimistic and others are pessimistic. Toffler gives his perspective that the future is a precondition to understand the consequences that are potential of our own actions (1970: 238). The present already gives us with a foretaste of the future. (1970: 45). Bostrom stated that experience gives a capacity but it is not useful for preparing to the future except we can predict it correctly that the lesson we get from the past can be applied to the future situations (2007: 3).

Veronica Roth, as reflected in her *Divergent* trilogy, represents one of those who have the pessimistic view of the future. Carver in Scheier states that pessimists always expect bad outcomes. Abdel Khaleq in Mahasneh explained that pessimists suppose the worst thing will happen and it is the reason of them to always anticipate everything in order to the badness, failure and disappointment do not happen in their life. It is because they have some characteristics such as: Negative perception, Anxiety (doesn't like uncertain situation), Sadness, Despair (give up and get more depressed), Doubtfulness (tend to be uncertain while encountering the challenges of diverse life), Low self-esteem. (Carver in Scheier, et al, 1994; Carver in Harry, 2012: 5; Carver in Mahasneh, 2013: 73; Abdel Khaleq in Mahasneh, 2013: 72; Wakker, 1990: 7; Shalhoub, 2012)

The *Divergent* trilogy is relatively recent work and not many studies have been conducted. Among other few studies about the *Divergent* trilogy is that Nesreen Abdallah Eldoliefy conducted entitled *Societies of Control in Young Adult Literature in Divergent Trilogy* (2015). On that research, Nesreen Abdallah Eldoliefy concerned about Foucault's concept of panopticism to demonstrate the containing nature of the trilogy. In this article, I give focus on the pessimistic view of the future regarding the genetic engineering.

2. Object of Study

The object of this study is divided into two, formal and material object. The formal object is pessimistic view of the future of genetic engineering. The material object is the novels written by Veronica Roth's *Divergent Trilogy*. The novels were published in 2011 until 2013 in United States. The novel was originally published in United States by HarperCollins Publishers. The first novel has 39 chapters and 223 pages, the second novel has 47 chapters and 222 pages, and the third novel has 56 chapters and 237 pages. Those novels were sold by Veronica Roth to Summit Entertainment. The major character in *Divergent Trilogy* is Beatrice Prior. Beatrice lives in future version of Chicago which is divided into five distinct factions. The first novel *Divergent* was adopted into *Divergent* film in 2014, the second novel *Insurgent* was adopted into *Insurgent's* film in 2015, the third novel *Allegiant* was adopted into 2 films; *Allegiant* part one released in 2016 and *Allegiant* part two released in 2017. The stars of film are Shailene Woodley and Theo James.

3. Method

The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative method. The type of data in this research is a form of textual data. It includes narrations, monologues and dialogues. These have some sentences which are arranged by many words that has meaning. The data collection is done through documentary or library research that is the writer seeks the data from printed media, the novel in this case, as the primary data and the other sources as secondary data. The following steps are the procedure to conduct the study: first, reading the novel repeatedly, second: taking, important notes in both the primary and secondary data, which is relevant to the study. The technique of data analysis that stated by Miles and Huberman (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 428-429) consists of three sub-processes: data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusion/verification.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Characteristics of Pessimistic View of The Future of Genetic Engineering

a. Despair

It can be interpreted in the way of narrator (Tris) thinking when the narrator finds out that her parents is from the outside of the fence and knows the society made by scientists, she starts to blame her parent. She concludes that the God of her parents is a bunch of scientist so they can let them to keep the society under control. The narrator regards her parents feels despair of God's decision for society like Roth feels that society will not believe on God's decision anymore in the future.

I catch myself thinking, Thank God for this, out of habit, and then I understand what he's so concerned about. What if my parents' God, their whole belief system, is just something concocted by a bunch of scientists to

keep us under control? And not just their beliefs about God and whatever else is out there, but about right and wrong, about selflessness? Do all those things have to change because we know how our world was made?
(Allegiant: 62)

Other despair can be seen too in the way the character of this novel; Cara and the narrator (Tris) have conversation. Cara wants to remind the narrator that she is the member of Erudite and then again she remind Tris. It implies that she emphasizes that she is a Erudite, the one of smart people in the her city. After a long time she has been an Erudite, the bureau tells her that she is the one of genetic damage although she is the kind of smart person in her city. She feels despair because what she had struggled in order to come out the city does not mean anything, she just receives info her genetic is damage that means smart people, people loves knowledge does not have value in the outside of the city.

She glowers at me. "That's kind of you to say."

"Sorry," I say. "I didn't mean it that way."

"I know." She sighs. "I'm . . . I'm an Erudite, you know."

I smile a little. "Yeah, I know."

"No." Cara shakes her head. "It's the only thing I am. Erudite. And now they've told me that's the result of some kind of flaw in my genetics . . and that the factions themselves are just a mental prison to keep us under control. Just like Evelyn Johnson and the factionless said." She pauses. "So why form the Allegiant? Why bother to come out here?" **(Allegiant: 61)**

The next paragraph delineates despair through conclusion of the situation given by the narrator (Tobias) after coming to outside of the fence. in bureau, the first place in the outside of the fence they have come, almost all of people from inside (Tobias' friends) wakes up late because they do not have any activity to be done not like in the faction. He feels despair that he has lost his purpose of life. He misses his past that has meaningful things to do but now he must be just waiting for what will happen.

b. Sadness

It can be seen in how the narrator (Tobias) explains his disappointment for not being Divergent. The narrator compares himself with his girlfriend, Tris, because Tris is Divergent. Divergent is categorized as Genetic Healing, so it means the narrator realizes that he is Genetic Damage. The narrator starts to blame himself because he isn't a Divergent one. He starts to look for the causes of his genetic damage and he finds out that the cause is from her mother. He feels sad knowing the good thing of his father isn't on him. It can be seen the thought of Roth about Genetic Engineering is she is afraid

society will be sad about their Genetic in the future and disappointed just because knowing their Genetic is not perfect as they want.

I process the information slowly, piece by piece. I'm not Divergent. I'm not like Tris. I'm genetically damaged.

The word "damaged" sinks inside me like it's made of lead. I guess I always knew there was something wrong with me, but I thought it was because of my father, or my mother, and the pain they bequeathed to me like a family heirloom, handed down from generation to generation. And this means that the one good thing my father had—his Divergence—didn't reach me.

(Allegiant: 79)

The other sadness delineated in this novel is when narrator (Tris) describes the other character's demeanor, Cara's. The narrator describes directly what she looks on Cara expression. Cara feels sad after knowing she is the one of damage too. The narrator categorized Cara is the strong person in Erudite as usual but the expression of Cara does not indicate her as usual she is.

And Cara is on her own, dragging her hand over her face. For the first time since I met her, she looks upset, the Erudite armor gone.

I sit down across from her. "You don't look so good." **(Allegiant: 61)**

c. Anxiety

It can be seen in the perspective of narrator (Tris) in viewing her life in inside the city (Chicago). Narrator regards that the people is just considered as containers of GD that scientist wants to correct their genes. The narrator feels anxiety of the future when society is valued just on their genetic. It may be true, the smart brain and the value of the heart will be not appreciated anymore in the future.

But of course, I know the answer to that question. To them, the people in our city are just containers of genetic material—just GDs, valuable for the corrected genes they pass on, and not for the brains in their heads or the hearts in their chests. **(Allegiant: 162)**

The other anxiety is displayed through the way the narrator (Tris) sees around her. She describes that everyone cannot accept the truth that recently they hear from David that tells them some info about Genetic; genetic damage and genetic healing. The narrator shows the each demeanor of her friends one by one that can be seen directly on the paragraph. It indicates each person has anxiety in themselves by showing their demeanor

No one seems to be adjusting well. Peter lies facing the wall. Uriah and Christina sit side by side, having a conversation in low voices. Caleb is

massaging his temples with his fingertips. Tobias is still pacing and gnawing on his fingernails. (**Allegiant: 61**)

d. Negative Perception

The negative perception is as the one of the characteristics depicted by Veronica Roth through support character, Rafi's guard. The perception is given by Rafi's guard while saying direct conversation. He gives the perspective that if you are not the important person or a GP, the others will not regard your death as a disaster or great loss. The guard reveals his opinion that the result of Genetic Engineering influences the perspective of injustice between Genetic Damage and Genetic Pure (Genetic Healing).

The other negative perception is delineated through the feeling of the narrator (Tris). When the genetic damage has to be fixed, the bureau makes social experiment as the solution, but in the fact, it needs to take a memory from people to change them suitable for the purpose. The narrator does not agree with the way of fixing the genetic damage should not use taking memory.

e. Low Self-Esteem

Roth delineates is society has low self-esteem viewing genetic engineering of the future in her novel is the way the narrator (Tris) said about her brother, Caleb's expression. She describes Caleb's demeanor while he knows that he is the one of genetic damage. It shows that Caleb does not have confidence in her self and regard himself limited by his damaged genes. He thinks that Divergent is not limited by genetic damage like him.

4.2 The Depictions of Pessimistic View of The Future of Genetic Engineering

- Society cannot develop naturally

It is shown the utterance said by Nita as a staff of Bureau. She says about the social experiment made by Bureau. She tells about the condition of people inside of the city. The people know something taught by Bureau because the memory of them has been erased. The information made is not entirely, just important to them to be known. The government does all of these in order to keep them under control. The government wants to make people inside the experiment as they want. People inside the social experiment does not develop naturally because Bureau has been erased their memory and government forms them as they want.

It can be seen through the utterance of character (Johanna) that gives information of different serum given to each faction to control them and in order to keep social experiment still exists. Every each serum has function to always keep their faction system do well.

Mary is a character as a leader of Midwest branch of GD rebel group in this novel. The utterance said by Mary indicates that it is the first time Mary meets people from inside of

the city and the others has told her about people inside of the city before. The cause of people in the city is only taught certain information, it makes them do not know about the outside of the city. Roth delineates that the consequences of the memory of people in experiment erased and filled up by certain information, they will not know the information outside of the city, the true information.

- Fixing the genetic deficiencies by making social experiment victimizes the life of many people

Nita is a staff of Bureau, she reveals the information that Tris and Tobias do not know about what happen behind of Abnegation destruction. It can be seen directly the way Nita told about the chronology of Abnegation destruction. Nita starts telling the cause of Abnegation destruction is because Abnegation wants to reveal the secret of the city. Bureau lets Abnegation suffering because the Bureau has intention that utterances implies on paragraph *than to risk the experiment*. They do not want to make the city having great loss. Bureau asked someone inside the city to contribute with her plan. Jeanine is just as mediator of Bureau to carry out the plan.

- Society wants equal treatment between Genetic Damage and Genetic Pure

Roth depicts the other consequence of the implementation of genetic engineering in the future is through the narrator's (Tris) direct utterance. She argues with the other main character (Tobias) about Nita's purpose, to make equality between Genetic Damage and Genetic Pure (Healing). It means that Nita wanted to have rebellion against the Bureau.

The others plan to rebel Bureau can be seen too in other utterance of narrator (Tris). narrator reveals her plan against the Bureau, she wants to rebel Bureau. The purpose of her plan is to erase the categorization of genetic that is regarded having deficiency.

- Society commits revenge to Bureau

At this plot, it shows some utterances said by the character, Zoe, she was people of inside the city but now as staff in bureau. She implies that there are the other experiment cities besides Chicago. The one of them is Indianapolis. Zoe explains the difference between Indianapolis and Chicago. The system of Indianapolis is not in the form of faction like Chicago. Zoe mentions the experiment city *the newer cities—Saint Louis, Detroit, and Minneapolis* and she adds *always placed experiments in the Midwest*.

In this plot is the way the character named Nita tells about Indianapolis through their experiences. she mentions that she was from Indianapolis. She tells the status of Indianapolis in her word *failed*. It means that Indianapolis is the one of experiments city that cannot make a success for Bureau.

Nita continues in other utterances informing about Indianapolis. She says *disbanded* as her word to explain what happen to Indianapolis now. Then she humiliates him self by saying *be a janitor*. It indicates that she feels her self unfortunate because she is the one who get unlucky life because of experiment.

Nita continues her story about Indianapolis in her direct utterances. Indianapolis given a status of failed one and disbanded. Bureau erases the memory of people in Indianapolis and *relocated* the remains.

Nita gives her perspective judging Bureau that they make bad treatment to people in experiment cities especially Indianapolis. She convinces the main character (Tobias) about his statement about Bureau although she wants to revenge the suffering of Genetic Damage caused by Bureau. Then Nita reveals her plan to have ally with Tobias (narrator).

- Genetic Damage is always blamed as the cause of War, Rebellion or the kind of bad action

The other consequences of implementation of genetic engineering in the future can be seen through the conversation between narrator (Tris) and support character named Matthew. Matthew concludes about Genetic Damage surround her blamed as cause of war.

5. Discussion

The Veronica Roth reflects her pessimistic views on her novel about the future through genetic engineering issue. She delineates her pessimistic views on her novel. Based on the theory, the characteristics of pessimistic view consist of six characteristics, namely: negative perception, anxiety, sadness, despair, doubtfulness, low self-esteem. From the analysis, the novel delivers only five characteristics of pessimistic view of the future namely; despair, anxiety, sadness, negative perception and low self-esteem. Those characteristics are depicted by viewing the future of genetic engineering. Roth gives it through the main character perspective such as the main character says it directly which is proposed to describe the situation, the other character's demeanor, showing certain action or implying through the other character's action and utterance

The dominant characteristic that Roth delivers is despair. Characteristics that have same average data in this novel, namely: sadness, anxiety, and negative perception. And the last characteristic is low self-esteem. This is the fewest data emerged in the novel. Roth delineates despair while a bunch of scientists discover such incredible technology toward genetic on human and it can influence the belief of society. They will not believe on God's decision anymore while the scientist can solve their problem and let them modify their life. Roth draws other despair too while society found out their flaws on their genetic they will give up on themselves. They will regard that their struggle, effort and knowledge do not mean anything because they will regard the others just see on their flaws. Then because of flaws they will see there is nothing that they can do. Their life is not meaningful or means useless. Roth gives the sadness of society is when society feels sadness because of their flaws then they will blame her parents because of their genetic that causes their flaws. It can cause society feels upset toward themselves. Society feel anxious too while they are in the environment their value of the heart and smart brain will not be appreciated anymore because of their flaws so it is hard to them to adjust themselves toward their life. It can make society suspect their life will be on injustice and

arbitrariness in the future. Roth draws low self-esteem in her novel such society will lose their confidence while facing their flaws toward their life.

Roth delineates some depictions toward pessimistic view of the future of genetic engineering. In her novel Roth delineates pessimistic view of the future of genetic engineering started by a bunch of scientists corrects the flaws of genetic on human. They make experiment city to solve it. The first action of them is erasing the memory of society and placed in some places such as Chicago, Indianapolis, Saint Louis, Detroit, Minneapolis and Midwest. Then, they were taught with certain information and knowledge that is only important to be known for them. It means they do not know the information entirely because the government wants to make them having certain life that government purposes. After period of time, the experiment city (Chicago) has problem that can make the city fail because the people inside the city who know that their city is made having intention to reveal the certain information but Bureau will not let it happen. So, Bureau cooperates with the people inside of the city that agree with them to keep the city from failure. Then, Bureau decides to sacrifice the Abnegation's life to keep the information hidden. Beside it, there was an experiment city that was ever failed eight years ago, namely: Indianapolis. People inside of experiment city had done certain of bad action. They did an explosive toward government building, then Bureau erased their memory to stop it and relocated them. Some people of Indianapolis volunteered to come to Bureau and being staff of Bureau. Then, that people finds out there is some injustice toward their genetic and experienced inequality such as the flaws on their genetic is always blamed for certain bad action such as rebellion, war and many more unlike genetic pure that is not blamed. Because of this reason, that people begins to hate them and plan for revenge them in order to make equality among them.

<http://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/may/14/veronica-roth-divergent-ya-dystopia-carve-the-mark> When Veronica Roth asked by an interviewer during the interview done by theguardian, why she wrote science scene because she wanted to throw up the questions about technology and had been inspired before by reading *Frank Herbert's Dune* which uses kind of futuristic setting. So she wrote dystopian fiction to be under scientific fiction with futuristic setting. Roth said that she implies a bit of issue of genetic engineering which exists in America <http://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/video/2013/dec/13/veronica-roth-interview-video> . She is interested too with the emotional scene, that is why Roth gives so much emotional scenes mixing science scenes in her novel, she said it on her interview interviewed by Roleck, Kate, a correspondent of Chicago's Tribune newspaper and website. <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/features/south-floridaparenting/stages/sfp-interview-veronica-roth-on-insurgent-divergent-and-life-overall-20150323-story.html>

Literary work is as communication form recording the social phenomena for certain period of time and certain place related the view of the author toward the condition and the situation when literary work made. Swingewood and Laurensen (1972: 13) give their argument that sociology of literature provides "mirror to the age" which has a different history in a long time. It means that literary work can make clear to the audience of the civilization in certain place for a certain time. This study focuses on the social

phenomenon in United States. There are some tragedies in United States caused by technology and chemical such as Tragedy of Love Canal in 1976 because the waste of Hooker Chemical, Nuclear Disaster of Harrisburg in 1979, Trial Test of Nuclear in Nevada that was contaminating part of United States zone from 1950 until 1992. Those tragedies contaminate the environment of United States which causes some bad effects toward society such as: diseases like Cancer, miscarriage, gene mutation that results disablement. The nervousness of society toward technology and chemical can damage their gene is delineated by Roth in her novel namely: despair, sadness, anxiety, negative perception and low self-esteem. The other phenomenon is developing in United States and the other country is genetic engineering on plant, animal and human. Genetic engineering on human such as cloning, designer human or babies (design the color of eyes, skin, hair, twin babies, etc) transgenic, and other genetic manipulations. Roth draws the fear of society toward technology and chemical toward the future of their life and regards that genetic engineering is not the best solution because society sees the result of genetic engineering is still uncertain. For period of time, the development of genetic engineering can be known that it has solved so many problems such the discovery of insulin hormone to solve problem on human health. Besides it, there are bad effects such as contaminated food and makes a new disease but the use of genetic engineering on human is different. It is still uncertain because there some failures toward cloning and the effect of designing human still cannot be known. It is because this treatment is forbidden to be done upon the suggestions from some leaders of religions.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the chapter IV, it turns into following conclusion. Firstly, based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the trilogy novel delivers only five characteristics of pessimistic view of the future namely; despair, anxiety, sadness, negative perception and low self-esteem. Those characteristics are depicted by viewing the future of genetic engineering. Roth draws despair through the way of narrator's (Tris) thinking about the lost of society's belief toward the God, the conversation between two characters (Tris and Cara) discussing genetic on them, the utterance of the narrator (Tobias) saying his life means nothing. Sadness is delineated by Roth through the narrator (Tobias) saying his disappointment knowing the flaw on his genetic and the narrator (Tris) describes the other character's demeanor that looks upset because her gene is damage. Roth gives the picture of anxiety through the perspective of the narrator (Tris) viewing her life that the life is just valued by gene not from the heart or the brain and the narrator (Tris) describes that everyone cannot adjust well after knowing their gene is damage. The other characteristic is negative perception, Roth depicts it through the perception of support character (Rafi's guard) about injustice toward gene and the feeling of the narrator (Tris) about taking memory of human. The last characteristic is low self-esteem the narrator (Tris) says about her brother's (Caleb) expression that didn't show confidence after knowing the flaw on his gene.

Secondly, the pessimistic view of the future is depicted through plot that illustrates: society cannot develop naturally, fixing the genetic deficiencies by making social experiment victimizes the life of many people, society wants equal treatment between

genetic damage and genetic pure, society commits revenge to Bureau, genetic damage is always blamed as the cause of certain bad action (such as war, rebellion and many more). Society cannot develop naturally because they have the life formed by scientist and government not like human as usual. Making social experiment to fix the deficiencies on gene victimizes the life of many people means the social experiment involves many people to form unnatural society. The society wants equal treatment between genetic damage and genetic pure because there is a discrimination among those genetics. Society commits revenge to Bureau is just the reason of they does not like discrimination in their life and included unaccepted feeling their life is under control. Genetic damage is always blamed as the cause for certain bad action means there is indication that GD is suspected having bad personality among them and GP is not.

Thirdly, Veronica gave concern for futuristic because she wants to raise awareness of the needs for wise usage of science and technology, especially genetic engineering. Roth emphasizes that technology and chemical is not always as better solution to solve problem in the life and it can cause bad impacts toward the life of human. If the use of technology and chemical is excessive it can contaminate the environment and the health of human. Such genetic engineering still delivers uncertain results whether it solves or damages the environment and the human gene.

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